

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 171304Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3452
INFO AMCONGEN BOMBAY
AMCONGEN CALCUTTA
AMCONGEN MADRAS
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 7118

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: MRS. GANDHI CONSOLIDATES HER POSITION IN CONGRESS; JANATA
UNITY STRAINED

REF: NEW DELHI 6837

1. IN THE WAKE OF THE ELECTION OF HER CANDIDATE, BRAHMANANDA REDDI, AS CONGRESS PRESIDENT, MRS. GANDHI HAS FURTHER CONSOLIDATED HER POSITION WITHIN THE PARTY BY BEING NAMED AS A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE (CWC) AND CENTRAL PARLIAMENTARY BOARD (CPB). THE SIX OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CWC NOMINATED BY REDDI ON MAY 13, AS WELL AS THE FOUR OTHERS NAMED TO THE CPB, ARE GENERALLY REGARDED AS PRO-
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MRS. GANDHI . SWARAN SINGH AND FORMER RAILWAYS MINISTER KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI ARE MEMBERS OF BOTH COMMITTEES AND ARE LIKELY TO TOE MRS. GANDHI'S LINE. THE "LEFTIST" ANTI-INDIRA FACTION APPEARS TO HAVE SUFFERED A SETBACK; NO ONE IDENTIFIED WITH THIS GROUP HAS BEEN NAMED TO SERVE ON EITHER COMMITTEE. IN ADDITION, ONLY TWO READILY-IDENTIFIABLE "LEFTISTS", FORMER STEEL MINISTER CHANDRAJIT YADAV AND YOUTH

CONGRESS LEADER P.R. DAS MUNSHI, WERE AMONG THE TEN PERSONS ELECTED TO THE CWC BY THE AICC ON MAY 6. BOTH FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT D.K. BAROOAH AND FORMER WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER S.S. RAY WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE PARTY'S TOP LEADERSHIP COUNCILS. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, RAY WILL NOT EVEN CONTEST A SEAT IN THE WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND INTENDS TO RETURN TO HIS LAW PRACTICE IN DELHI.

2. WHILE THE CONGRESS APPEARS TO BE MAINTAINING ITS OLD LEADERSHIP, JANATA UNITY IS UNDER STRAIN AS IT DISTRIBUTES TICKETS FOR THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. BARELY HAD THE INK DRIED ON THE RESOLUTIONS FOR MERGER THAN THE COMPONENT PARTIES OF THE JANATA BEGAN SQUABBLING OVER THEIR FAIR SHARE OF MLA NOMINATIONS. ASIDE FROM THE TOUGH QUESTION OF GIVING ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION TO MEMBERS OF THE FIVE CONSTITUENT PARTIES, A MAJOR SORE POINT HAS BEEN THE QUESTION OF GIVING TICKETS TO CONGRESS DEFECTORS, A PRACTICE WHICH THE JAN SANGH STRONGLY OPPOSES. THE NET RESULT IS THAT MOST JANATA NOMINATION LISTS HAVE STILL NOT BEEN FINALIZED AS THE MAY 18 DEADLINE APPROACHES.

3. HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH CREATED A MINOR ROW LAST WEEK WHEN HE REPORTEDLY THREATENED TO RESIGN AS JANATA "OBSERVER" FOR DISTRIBUTING TICKETS IN U.P. HIS ALLEGED GRIEVANCE WAS THAT HE WANTED TO BE APPOINTED OBSERVER FOR ALL OF NORTH INDIA. ACCORDING TO SOME PRESS REPORTS, HE EVEN THREATENED TO WITHDRAW THE BLD'S LETTER OF ACCESSION TO THE JANATA PARTY. CHARAN SINGH WAS EVENTUALLY MOLLIFIED

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AND HAS SINCE STRONGLY DENIED THAT HE WAS AT ODDS WITH PM DESAI. NONETHELESS, AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT PREVIOUSLY, THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE GOI AND THE RULING PARTY COMPRISES MANY STRONG PERSONALITIES, AND WE CANNOT RULE OUT FUTURE ACTS OF PIQUE BY SOME OF JANATA'S IN PRIMA DONNAS.

4. JANATA'S POLL ADJUSTMENTS WITH OTHER PARTIES IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS MAY NOT BE REPEATED FOR THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. PERHAPS OUT OF CONFIDENCE THAT THE JANATA "WIND" OF MARCH WILL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CARRY IT TO POWER UNASSISTED IN JUNE, ATTEMPTS TO FORGE ELECTORAL UNDERSTANDINGS WITH THE CPM IN WEST BENGAL HAVE BEEN DEADLOCKED, EVEN IN THE PUNJAB, THE CHANCES OF AN ALLIANCE WITH THE AKALI DAL ARE GROWING DIMMER.

5. COMMENT: MANY OF OUR SOURCES BELIEVE THAT THE CALL FOR STATE ELECTIONS WAS A SERIOUS MISTAKE; IT BROUGHT OUT THE INHERENT FISSURES INSIDE THE JANATA. ONE JANATA INSIDER TOLD US THAT WITH TIME CONGRESS STATE GOVERNMENTS WOULD HAVE DROPPED

"LIKE RIPE FRUIT". THE JANATA PARTY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SURVIVE
THE CURRENT STRESSES, AS THE LEADERS OF THE CONSTITUTENT
PARTIES PRESUMABLY REALIZE THAT WITHOUT THE JANATA THEY ALL
RISK BEING IN THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS ONCE AGAIN. THE
SCRAMBLE FOR MLA TICKETS IS CERTAINLY MORE SERIOUS
THAN MERE "TEETHING PROBLEMS", AS JAGJIVAN RAM HAS CALLED
IT, BUT ANY LONGER TERM INJURY TO THE PARTY CAN NOT YET
BE ASSESSED.
SCHNEIDER

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